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SUBJECT: SUDAN: MARCH 26 UNSC BRIEFING BY THE AU-UN CHIEF
NEGOTIATOR FOR DARFUR DJIBRIL BASSOLE [AND UN
UNDER-SECRETARY GENERAL JOHN HOLMES].

1. USUN may draw from the following points for its March 26 briefings by the AU-UN Chief Negotiator for Darfur Djibril Bassole (and UN Under-Secretary General for Humanitarian Affairs and Emergency Relief Coordinator John Holmes.)

Begin points:

-- The United States would like to thank AU/UN Chief Mediator Bassole for his briefing on the status of the Darfur Peace talks and for his efforts to mediate a lasting peace (and UN Under-Secretary General John Holmes on the humanitarian crisis) in Darfur.

-- We are deeply concerned with the status of the peace talks and worry that the irresponsible decision by the Government of Sudan to expel 13 international NGOs and to close 3 local NGOs has not only undermined recent progress made on peace talks in Qatar, but is also threatening the stability of the Comprehensive Peace Agreement.

-- The Justice and Equality Movement (JEM) has recently said that it will not return to the talks until the Government of Sudan returns all political prisoners (as was agreed in Qatar) and reverses its decision to expel these humanitarian NGOs. While we continue to encourage JEM and all groups to come back to the negotiating table, we understand the concern by some of these groups over the NGO expulsions.

-- We do not, however, want groups to begin looking for pretexts to abrogate their responsibilities agreed to under the talks or to undermine the possibility of reaching future agreements.

-- We once again call on the Government of Sudan to reverse its decision to expel and close these NGOs before further damage, on both the humanitarian and political fronts, is done and to ensure that vulnerable populations in Darfur have access to life-saving aid. Until the basic necessities of the people of Darfur are met, it will be hard for many of them to focus on the peace process.

-- National NGOs and GOS ministries simply do not have the capacity at present to fill all of the gaps in humanitarian relief that resulted from the GOS decision.

-- The GOS should immediately end all bureaucratic restrictions, such as technical agreement requirements and travel restrictions, and permit capable international agencies to fill the most urgent humanitarian gaps.

-- The results of the joint UN/GoS assessment indicate significant gaps exist in the delivery of essential services to millions of vulnerable men, women and children in Darfur. Given the extreme complexities of operating in Darfur, all of these lost capacities cannot be replaced either quickly or easily. It took years to put Darfur's humanitarian infrastructure in place and only a day to tear a good part of it down.

-- We laud the efforts of the UN and those NGOs remaining on the ground in Darfur to cover the gaps created by President's Bashir's cruel dictate to expel NGOs who can be rightfully credited with saving many lives in Darfur over the past six years. However, the results of the joint assessment indicate that their capacity will not be replaced any time soon and that this lost capacity will translate into needless deaths and suffering.

Begin questions for Minister Bassole:

-- Has the decision to expel and close NGOs from Darfur hindered your efforts to bring other rebel movements to the negotiating table?

-- What is your assessment of the recent effort by Libya to unite factions of the Sudan Liberation Army?

-- What is your assessment of JEM's recent announcement of unification with some SLA commanders?

-- How do you plan to engage JEM to bring it back into the negotiating fold?

-- What type of timeline are you considering for the re-start of talks?

-- How can the UNSC be helpful in your efforts?

Begin questions for Under-Secretary General Holmes:

-- How credible are GOS commitments to providing funding in the health and nutrition sector and the "water operation" through the end of 2009?

-- What are your conclusions about the ability of the GOS and the international community to fill the gaps? For example, is the Sudanese government willing to provide funding to build local capacity as recommended for the WASH and health and nutrition sectors?

-- Several of the assessment conclusions appear to be contradictory, particularly regarding the capacity of Sudanese NGOs and Ministry of Health officials to fill current gaps and provide future assistance. Recognizing the difficulty of an ever-changing operating environment, can you comment on the apparent contradictions (per the WASH section)?

-- The report recommends that private sector arrangements be made to help fill the gaps. Can you elaborate on what type of private sector arrangements are envisioned?

-- The findings for the WASH sector in the executive summary conclude that "immediate financial and technical support is required for all camps" and "national NGOs cannot take over the responsibility unless their capacity is built, which will take time." Will there be a time-frame developed to clearly identify needs, priorities, and entities responsible?

-- It should be noted that weakness in any one sector can impact other sectors and ultimately increase disease and mortality rates in the long run, can you comment on the current plans to address all gaps or whether some sectors will receive greater support or priority than others? Also, please comment on the standards for delivery and targets for future programming.

-- Are there plans to conduct additional assessments?

If raised by UN Under-Secretary General John Holmes:

-- We again categorically reject the linkage of the GOS decision to expel these life-saving NGOs to the decision of the ICC to issue an arrest warrant for President Bashir.
CLINTON